



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

MIAMI GUN DEALER ARRESTED, CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO EXPORT ARMS TO SOUTH AMERICA

Federal agents seized weapons, ammo destined for terrorist groups

MIAMI- Marcos Daniel Jiménez, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special Agent-in-Charge Jesus Torres, and Julie Torres, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives announced today the arrest of Joseph Ruiz Tuesday on a criminal complaint charging Ruiz with conspiring to export arms to South America.

Ruiz is the owner and federally licensed operator of Dade County Guns & Ammo, Inc. located in Miami.

The criminal complaint alleges Ruiz used his business to supply weapons and ammunition to a group of weapons builders and smugglers who then supplied the weapons to South American terrorist groups.

This arrest stems from an investigation that also led to the earlier indictment of Rafael Samper, Edgar Semprun, Antonio Tarrab, Raul Gomez DeMolina, Bilmer Paz, and Rodney Sharp on similar charges.

The ICE and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) investigation revealed that the organization, which Ruiz is alleged to have participated in according to the criminal complaint, had arranged the purchasing of firearms and ammunition in the United States for several years. They then arranged to illegally export the weapons and ammunition by sea to Venezuela.

Once exported, the weapons and ammunition were allegedly sold for profit to the highest bidders, usually in Venezuela and Colombia.

It was determined that the weapons and ammunition was purchased by middlemen acting on behalf of the Colombian FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolutionaries de Colombia) and the Colombian

Paramilitary Group, AUC (Auto Defensas Unidas de Colombia). Both of these groups are designated as terrorist organizations by the State Department.

As part of this investigation, ICE special agents and ATF agents seized more than 700,000 rounds of ammunition, more than 200 weapons, and the tools and parts necessary to build many more automatic weapons.

"Criminal enterprises such as this are the logisticians for terrorism," said ICE's Torres. "They functioned like a business under the cover of a business in order to put weapons into the hands of the trigger pullers. "

Ruiz has been charged with violating Title 18, United States Code, Section 371; Title 22, United States Code, Section 2778, and Title 22, Code of Federal Regulations, Sections 121.1, 123.1, and 127.1.

If convicted of conspiring to violate the Arms Export Control Act and of the charge of violating that statute, Ruiz would face a statutory maximum sentence of five and 10 years prison on each charge, respectively, and up to \$1 million in fines.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Melissa Damian.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.